

The new Integralist Conservatism: a briefing



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It is not enough to dismiss Breivik as a 'madman', or a 'nut'. His was a carefully planned, reasoned and executed strike. Moreover, it was a thoroughly political act, politically motivated and with political content. Breivik's rationale was not born in a vacuum, nor was it a post-hoc rationalisation of his actions. It is telling that psychological explanations are reserved for white terrorists, whereas the rhetoric of jihadis is taken at face value.

Breivik's thinking is part of an identifiable current, and he says as much, calling it the "Vienna school of thought" in his 1500 page "manifesto", *A European Declaration of Independence, 2083*.¹ When he references Robert Spencer and Melanie Phillips, he nails his colours to the flag of a new right-wing movement; an international conservative movement which has been gestating for the past decade, facilitated primarily by the internet. Since then, it has exploded onto the streets in the form of the English Defence League, and entered parliament in the form of Geert Wilders.

While the media, when critical, is content to describe this school of thought as far-right, it stumbles when it encounters the fervent public denunciations of Nazism and biological racism that are a hallmark of this strain of rightism. Leftists, too, frequently cannot articulate what they're about without falling back on the label of "fascist". This isn't enough.

In this article, we attempt to articulate the premises, ideology and composition of this new, radically right-wing movement. For the purposes of argument, we call it Integralist conservatism...

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We have already stated that it would be a mistake to define the politics of the groups under discussion as fascist. However, the movement we describe is expanding by filling an ideological gap on the far-right, which has been left open by an outmoded and unpalatable



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“Vienna school of thought” in his 1500 page “manifesto”, A European Declaration of Independence, 2083.1 When he references Robert Spencer and Melanie Phillips, he nails his colours to the flag of a new right-wing movement;

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fascism reliant on biological racism and anti-semitism. By replicating enough of fascism's basic assumptions and tenets – primarily its fixation on an essential "nation" corrupted by both leftism and a vilified ethnic-religious group – it supercedes it in the task of providing an organisational space for an anti-cosmopolitan, anti-'modern'² and anti-immigration reaction.

Importantly, it has concocted a far-right ideology which is not reliant on outmoded racial nationalism. The political toxicity of anti-semitic conspiracy theories based is certainly intact, but similar conspiracy theories can be freely applied to Muslims, and frequently are in semi-mainstream political discourse and in the pages of mass-circulation newspapers like the Daily Mail.³

Similarly, students of fascist thought will sense a disturbing familiarity with the kind of argument which blurs together Marxism, a sinister ethnic-religious 'enemy' and, sometimes, finance capital as an existential threat to the nation. They will also see obvious comparisons between proto-fascist antisemites such as Edouard Drumont, author of *La France juive* (*Jewish France*), which claimed an ongoing conspiracy by Jews to subjugate France, and contemporary rightists

who paint nightmarish pictures of an imminent Sharia-dominated, Muslim Europe. Paranoid themes of national decline as a result of cosmopolitan decadence and mass immigration obviously echo the propaganda of fascism through the years.

However, there are significant differences with classical fascism which sets such thought apart. Biological racism is invariably rejected. Similarly, rather than promulgating antisemitism, Zionism and strong support for Israeli foreign policy is the order of the day amongst this new right, logically leading to a rejection of Palestinian aspirations and often the idea that they exist as a 'people' at all. Attempts to form centralised, programmatic parties are rare; rather Integralist conservatives attempt to make their ideas the dominant ones within right-wing discourse. When economic policy exists, it is invariably a form of idealistic neoliberalism, as opposed to the monopolistic corporatism of fascist capitalism. Most importantly, the idealised, essential 'nation' being defended from the Muslim-Marxist threat is not the romantic, pre-industrial racist fantasy of neo-Nazis, but liberal democracy before the advent of mass immigration in the late 1950s. These new rightwingers frequently make much of their anti-Nazi credentials, identifying Western Civilisation before the current fall with the western democracies which took part in the second world war.

For this reason, we argue here that this new right should be defined on its own terms. We call it 'integralist conservatism'. The rationale for this is twofold. Firstly, it has its origins in the fringes of the mainstream right, rather than fascist circles (although it is successfully penetrating and supplanting classical fascism within the far-right, especially online). Its tenets are the subject of bestselling books by the likes of Robert Spencer and Melanie Phillips, its Muslim-baiting is mirrored in the pages of the Daily Mail and Express. Secondly, we use 'integralism' not in the sense of fascist economic integralism, but rather the viewpoint which sees an essential, unitary nation corrupted by external conspiracy. In the case of fascism, this was an alliance of Jews, Marxists and cosmopolitan political elites. The new right finds this alliance in Muslims, multiculturalists and leftists.

Integralist conservatism is not a moniker that has been used by any of the groups or thinkers under discussion, nor is it likely ever to be, but it is an appropriate enough term to describe the politics of the movement.

As with classical fascism, the new integralist conservatism has no central

codification in the writings of a founding intellectual, and its lack of enshrinement in party platforms (with limited exceptions) means that there is no written set of tenets to refer to. However, it exists as a recognisable body of thought, and was identifiable enough to Breivik as the “Vienna school of thought”. Its basic assumptions and propositions are:

- * Identification of a monolithic 'Islam' as an immediate and existential threat to 'the West'.
 - * Clash of civilisations thesis.
 - * Belief in an ongoing Islamification of Western culture, as both a conscious effort by Muslims and a result of Muslim immigration.
 - * Opposition to multiculturalism as the facilitator of Islamisation.
 - * Inability to explain the advent of multiculturalism without recourse to conspiracy theories about Marxist seizure of academia and political institutions (as opposed to, for instance, the precedent of communalism in the British Empire).
 - * Hostility to Marxism, in both its real and perceived manifestations.
 - * Where an economic outlook exists, it is invariably a form of laissez-faire neoliberalism
- We will next outline the actual composition of this movement.

The integralist axis: rightist authors, Defence leagues, the populist parties

Modern integralist conservatism exists primarily as an internet-facilitated axis between rightwing authors and bloggers, street-based, hooligan-orientated street outfits such as the English Defence league, and the rightwing populist parties and politicians espousing its tenets. Primary amongst these parties is Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom in Holland.

We will here provide short briefings on these actors:

1. Rightist authors

- Robert Spencer. The American founder of the Jihadwatch and Dhimmiwatch websites, and author of *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam, Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs* and *The Post-*

American Presidency: The Obama Administration's War on America with Pamela Geller (see below) amongst other texts.

Founder of Stop the Islamisation of America and Freedom Defense Initiative with Pamela Geller. His core argument is that Islam is monolithic, inherently violent and is engaged in a conspiracy to Islamise the West. Quoted extensively by mass murderer Anders Breivik in his manifesto.

- Pamela Geller. American author, founder of the Atlas Shrugs blog, co-founder of Stop the Islamisation of America and co-author of *The Post-American Presidency: The Obama Administration's War on America* with Robert Spencer. Best known for her role in whipping up the controversy around the so-called “ground zero Mosque”, an Islamic community centre two blocks away from the World Trade Centre. Argues that Muslims are actively imposing Sharia law on the United States. Strong supporter of Israeli foreign policy, claims that Palestinians do not exist, advocates annexation of Gaza, the deportation of anti-war and civil rights activists from Israel, etc. Supports the EDL and murdered South African white supremacist Eugene Terre'Blanche. Has connections with the US Tea Party and the “birther”

movement, continues to claim Obama is not an American despite the release of his long-form birth certificate, etc.

- Gisèle Littman, aka Bat Ye'or. Egyptian-born British writer, author of eight books. Central focus on the condition of non-Muslims in Muslim-majority countries. Founder of term

'dhimmitude', ubiquitous amongst the conservative integralist movement and used in reference to the supposed aim of Muslims in the west to subjugate the 'native' populations under Sharia law. Similarly the originator of the term 'Eurabia', which she claims is a conspiracy between European and Arab establishments to isolate Israel and contend with the United States; however it is also frequently used in integralist conservative circles to refer to the supposed immediate future of a Europe dominated by Islam.

- Oriana Fallaci. Deceased Italian journalist who authored a number of strongly anti-Muslim books after retirement, claimed that Europe had already become “Eurabia”, paints European

Muslims as dangerous parasites on the body of Western civilisation, foreign

Muslim populations as engaging in a siege of Europe and calls for Western governments to enact harsher policies against “Islamofascism” frequently defined as Islam generally.

- Other writers popular amongst Integralist Conservatives include, Ibn Warraq, Bruce Bawar, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Daniel Pipes, Melanie Phillips and Christopher Hitchens (his later, pro-war and anti-Islamist writing).

Street Movements

- English Defence League. Loosely-organised, street-based “counter-Jihad” movement. It has no formal membership structures, and has been organised almost entirely through the internet, primarily using Facebook. It has a self-appointed leadership, with “Tommy Robinson” - a.k.a. tanning salon proprietor Stephen Yaxley-Lennon - at its head. The EDL

generally claims membership on the basis of users of its Facebook group and forums, but actual attendance at its national demonstrations does not appear to have ever exceeded 3,000.

Considerably smaller numbers have appeared when it has called simultaneous local demonstrations without national mobilisation in advance.

The EDL has no clear policies or positions on anything other than opposition to “Islamic extremism”. However, its website and spokespeople nearly always present a monolithic

'Islam' as the problem.⁴ Thinly-veiled Muslim-baiting forms the basis for most of their activities, and they present everything from the existence of British-Pakistani drug dealers, the targeting of white teenagers for grooming by Asian sex offenders, the serving of halal meat at some fast food outlets and hit-and-run deaths by Asian drivers as part of a Jihad against the UK.

Their demonstrations have frequently led to rampages through Asian areas, and attacks on local residents. An EDL march in Leicester led to an attack on a local fast food restaurant called Big John's, which was filled with terrified dining families⁵, and other Asian-owned businesses⁶. Asian taxi drivers, and even passing motorists have been on the receiving end of mob attacks by EDL demonstrators.

The EDL are also increasingly taking an aggressively anti-leftist stance, initially it appears as a response to the ubiquitous counter-demonstrations by the SWP front group Unite Against Fascism, but now taking the form of opposition to a conspiratorial alliance between

'communists' and Islamism.⁷ This has also led to the EDL carrying articles attacking trade unions and the labour party as part of an ongoing and covert “Marxist” campaign against Britain.

This opposition to the left has manifested itself in a number of violent attacks on left-wing and anti-racist events. In the wake of the student protests of 2010-2011, which saw the occupation of the Conservative party's Millbank offices in November 2011, Yaxley-Lennon threatened that further student protests would be opposed by the EDL. This opposition did not appear. However, EDL groups have organised attacks on smaller, softer targets instead.

April saw an attack by 40 chanting EDL supporters on an anti-racist meeting in Brighton, though they were unable to force the doors. In May 2011 EDL members threw bricks at the windows of a community centre in Barking while an anti-racist meeting took place inside.

June saw them attack an anti-racist gig in Leeds, while in July 2011 EDL plans to attack a Srebrenica Massacre memorial event in Manchester were foiled partly due to the police noticing its public organisation on Facebook, as well as militant antifascist opposition from Manchester Anti-Fascist Alliance and Irish Republicans on the day.

However, none of this is to gift them the 'hard man' image they desperately desire. On a number of occasions they have come seriously unstuck when dealing with militant anti-

fascist groups and other physical opposition. They were driven off in their aforementioned attack on the Rage against Racism event in Leeds, with a leading Bradford EDL 'celebrity'

requiring urgent medical attention. A marauding group of EDL members ran into difficulty in Bristol last year when they mistook militant anti-fascists for UAF members, and were forced to seek sanctuary behind police lines and in the back of ambulances. On numerous occasions the EDL have not fared well when they come up against determined opposition by local Asian youths.

The EDL have also attempted to cultivate links with loyalist terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland, as well as with Ulster Loyalism in general.⁸ This has led to increased interest in them from Irish republican groupings.

- EDL splinter groups.

Partly as a result of internal power struggles between local “top boys” and the self-appointed EDL leadership, and partly as a result of conflict between more classically racist elements in the EDL and those who want to promote a multiracial image, a number of splinter groups have been set up in the north of England which have an uneasy relationship with the EDL

'mainstream'. Members also go by the moniker 'UAF hunting club'.

The main groups are the North West and North East Infidels. They are more openly violent and racist in their public posturing, but it is yet to be seen whether they have the capacity to back this up with actions. They have fewer reservations about working with openly Neo-Nazi elements, and members have been implicated in the relaunch of the notorious Redwatch website.⁹

Due to the EDL having no formal membership structure, the 'infidels' still attend EDL events and demonstrations, leading in some instances to infighting between factions. This was the case during their botched demonstration in Blackburn in 2011.

-Other 'defence leagues'.

Following the success and publicity enjoyed by the EDL, there have been attempts to set up copycat organisations in various European countries. None of these have seen any success, partly because of concerted opposition from the get-go. The first event organised by the Norwegian Defence League, for instance, saw overwhelming opposition from anti-Fascists less squeamish about physical confrontation than Unite Against Fascism.

The EDL have also attempted to cultivate links with elements within the right-wing Tea Party movement in America. The original 'defence league', the far-right, terrorist Jewish Defence League have also voiced support for the EDL.

European Right-wing populism

The third element of the integralist conservative axis is an increasing section of populist right-wing parties in Europe. In an atmosphere of anti-Muslim populism manifested in bans on minarets and veils, fertile space is being created in the mainstream for Integralist conservative politics. Far-right parties with roots in classical fascism, such as the BNP, are moving over to a much more marketable Conservative Integralist position. Due to the shades of influence such thinking enjoys in various parties in different countries, we will only concentrate on the leading example here.

- Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom

Geert Wilders has rapidly become a figurehead and talisman for Conservative Integralists.

Breivik described Wilders' party as the only one fit for conservatives, while the EDL have organised solidarity demonstrations with Wilders,

The flamboyant Wilders has built a career around his crusade to halt the “Islamisation of

Europe”, and his positions have become the bread and butter of conservative integralist thought: a ban on the Koran, a halt to the building of Mosques, and the end of immigration from Muslim countries. In as far as his policies are shared throughout the movement, his canny opposition to the traditional Eurofascist right and its leaders such as Jean-Marie Le Pen and Jörg Haider has been replicated in the public distancing of the BNP by the EDL, despite many hushed-up links between the two.¹⁰ The success of Wilders' Party for Freedom, which is now the third-largest opposition party in Holland, may well be a glimpse into the future for other countries.

Opposition

In discussing the advent of what we call here “integralist conservatism”, the obvious point of what we want to achieve by doing so arises.

Firstly, tactical knowledge is important. We can expect to be confronted by these people; EDL activists are now attempting to press the left and anti-fascists in a way similar to NF

activists in the 1970s. They have made it clear that socialists of all kinds and

anti-racist organisers are now targets, as a result we will need to actively defend ourselves. We need to be clear who we are dealing with, especially to inform propaganda, as it is not enough to shout 'Nazi' at an opposition who are overwhelmingly not Nazis.

Secondly we can expect this mode of thought to be at the leading edge of any reactionary movements which may emerge in the near future. Given the stated hostility of the EDL, for example, towards strikers, trade unions, anti-cuts and student protestors we can expect these people to be the unofficial street wing of reaction should any large scale struggles arise.

Lastly, these ideas are nowhere near as far from the mainstream as, for example, the fascism of the National Front. Hostility to Muslims permeates political discourse, the official enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan is Muslim, the terrorist we are supposed to be constantly vigilant against is always presumed to be a Muslim, the examples are countless. In a climate of reaction, we should not be surprised to see these kinds of ideas to form the ideological cover for a general assault by capital, with the enemies of 'freedom' in the unions, the 'Muslim community' and the left taking the role of public enemy, and the working class divided on communal lines.



1. A reference both to the seige of Vienna by Ottoman forces in 1683 and the anti-Muslim blog 'Gates of Vienna'



2. We mean this in the sense that such groups invariably paint a picture of national decline, and identify the root cause of the "Muslim takeover" as the wave of social changes which have taken place since the 1960s. The irony being that the movement is thoroughly (post-)modern in its reliance on the internet and social networking



3. Melanie Phillips regularly uses the pages of this paper to claim Obama is a secret Muslim, and Britain is drifting towards Islamic takeover



4. See, for example, this recent (July 2011) article from the EDL website on Shia and Sunni Islam: “I present the following transcript and the title “The fundamental differences between Shia and Sunni Islam” to provide some understanding regarding the enemy we face. I say enemy, for unless you are Muslim, you are the enemy of Islam and deserve to die.”



5. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxdTEVzzr_s&feature=player_embedded



6.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3ZAWQwF2GI&feature=player_embedded#at=2

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7. For instance, a recent article on the EDL website attempted to show “ how the far-Left secretly worked to use militant islam against you”. This 'expose' attempted to demonstrate the basis of the conspiracy between the SWP and radical Islam.

However, in attempting to do this, they used quotes from Chris Harman's pamphlet

“the Prophet and the Proletariat” which in fact laid out the argument that political Islam has no emancipatory content, and is a reactionary petty-bourgeois movement: “...

socialists cannot give support to the Islamists either. That would be to call for the swapping of one form of oppression for another, to react to the violence of the state by abandoning the defence of ethnic and religious minorities, women and gays, to collude in scapegoating that makes it possible for capitalist exploitation to continue unchecked providing it takes “Islamic” forms. It would be to abandon the goal of independent socialist politics, based on workers in struggle organising all the oppressed and exploited behind them, for a tail-ending of a

petty bourgeois utopianism which cannot even succeed in its own terms.” It was this, far more principled position which was abandoned by the SWP as it attempted to cozy up to political Islam in the anti-war movement and in the lead-up to its electoral turn with Respect.



8. <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/news/article/1818/EDL-photo-SHOOT>



9. <http://manchesterafa.org/2011/07/20/redwatch-is-back/>



10. <http://uaf.org.uk/2011/02/barnsley-antifascists-march-as-edls-links-to-bnp-exposed/>